

Analysis of the Effect of Spatial Planning, Population Density, and Geographic Location on Income Inequality in Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

This paper analyzes the impact of spatial planning, population density, and geographic location on income inequality in Indonesia, using a normative juridical approach. The study examines the legal frameworks and policies related to spatial planning, population management, and regional development, and how these contribute to or mitigate income disparities across the country. The findings indicate that while Indonesia has established various legal measures, such as the National Spatial Planning Act and Regional Autonomy Law, significant gaps in implementation persist, particularly in balancing urban and rural development. The study suggests that decentralization has led to uneven policy enforcement, with regions in strategic locations experiencing greater economic opportunities compared to remote and isolated areas. Furthermore, legal frameworks often fail to address regional disparities effectively due to insufficient coordination and enforcement. The paper concludes that targeted interventions, stronger enforcement mechanisms, and greater alignment between central and local government policies are crucial for reducing income inequality in Indonesia.

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Income inequality in Indonesia remains a significant challenge despite the country's economic growth. Various factors, including government expenditure, foreign direct investment (FDI), and regional development policies, contribute to this disparity. The uneven distribution of wealth is further exacerbated by geographic and infrastructural challenges, particularly in remote and rural areas. While efforts have been made to address these issues, they have not been entirely effective in reducing income inequality. Government spending has been

identified as a tool to reduce regional inequality, yet its impact has been limited. The average regional inequality index in Western Indonesia is moderate, at 0.465, indicating that fiscal policies have not significantly reduced inequality [1]. There is a need for evaluation and improvement in government spending policies to make them more effective in addressing regional disparities [1]. Higher Gross Regional Domestic Product (GRDP) per capita and increased FDI are associated with higher income inequality, as indicated by a higher Gini coefficient across Indonesian provinces [2].

Strategies such as enhancing infrastructure, creating business opportunities, and promoting tourism are suggested to mitigate these disparities [2]. Indonesia's archipelagic nature presents significant challenges, particularly for remote areas that lag in development due to lack of road access, natural resources, and human resource capacity [3]. Bureaucratic inefficiencies and insufficient government policies further exacerbate regional development inequalities [3]. While spatial aspects have not been adequately considered in policies, economic factors like exports and imports have a positive relationship with income inequality [4]. There is no evidence of spatial linkages between regions affecting income inequality, suggesting a focus on economic rather than spatial factors in policy-making [4].

Spatial planning plays a key role in economic development by allocating land use and organizing space for various activities. Effective planning can enhance economic opportunities, reduce disparities, and improve infrastructure, while poor planning can worsen income inequalities. Population density, linked to urbanization, impacts income distribution by concentrating opportunities in urban centers and neglecting rural areas. In Ukraine, spatial planning is essential for post-war reconstruction, aiming to restore territories, attract investments, and support business development [5], [6]. In Bekasi, Indonesia, spatial planning is critical for sustainable environmental management, integrating land use with socio-economic and environmental factors [7]. In England, local spatial plans influence public health and economic outcomes, although many lack integration with health strategies [8]. High population density in cities often leads to concentrated wealth, while rural areas are neglected [7]. Effective spatial planning can address these disparities by promoting balanced regional development [9]. Challenges in planning include limited financial resources, insufficient personnel, and outdated information, especially in post-war contexts like Ukraine (Melnyk et al., 2024). Solutions include harmonizing spatial

and strategic planning, updating documents, and involving stakeholders for inclusive development [5].

Indonesia's geographic location as an archipelago significantly impacts its economic landscape, contributing to regional income imbalances. The vast and dispersed islands create natural barriers, limiting access to markets, investment, and infrastructure, and leading to economic disparities. While some regions benefit from strategic positions that enhance trade and investment, others remain isolated and economically marginalized. Indonesia's strategic location offers advantages in international trade, boosting its global economic competitiveness [10]. However, the archipelagic nature also presents challenges, as isolated regions face limited access to infrastructure and markets, hindering growth [11]. The inconsistent distribution of financial resources between central and regional governments exacerbates economic imbalances, with resource-rich regions benefiting more [12]. Economic growth varies across provinces, influenced by factors such as investment and human capital, with regions that have better access to these resources experiencing higher growth [13]. Income inequality is worsened by regional disparities, with economic factors playing a more significant role than spatial considerations in influencing inequality [4].

The novelty of this study lies in its focused exploration of the intersection between spatial planning, population density, and geographic location in relation to income inequality in Indonesia, approached through a normative juridical lens. While previous studies have addressed the economic impacts of urbanization and demographic factors, few have analyzed how existing legal frameworks and policies directly influence these issues within the context of Indonesia's diverse geographical and socio-economic landscape. This research seeks to fill this gap by offering a comprehensive assessment of how legal structures governing land use, regional development, and demographic management can either alleviate or exacerbate income inequality. Moreover, it will present recommendations for potential legal reforms

to create a more inclusive approach to spatial planning, ensuring that economic opportunities are more evenly distributed across Indonesia's regions.

Despite Indonesia's significant progress in economic growth, the issue of income inequality remains a persistent and growing challenge. The uneven distribution of wealth and opportunities across different regions of the country has been exacerbated by rapid urbanization, demographic shifts, and regional disparities in infrastructure and resource allocation. The current spatial planning framework, which governs land use and development, often fails to address the needs of marginalized areas, leading to concentrated wealth in urban centers and persistent poverty in rural regions. Additionally, population density and geographic location contribute to these imbalances, with densely populated urban areas seeing higher economic activity and better access to services, while remote and less accessible regions continue to face stagnation. This research seeks to investigate how these factors—spatial planning, population density, and geographic location—interact with one another and contribute to income inequality in Indonesia.

1.2 Research Objectives

To analyze the relationship between spatial planning policies and income inequality in Indonesia, identifying how land use decisions affect the distribution of wealth and opportunities across regions.

- 1) To assess the role of population density in shaping economic disparities, exploring how urbanization and demographic concentration influence the accessibility of resources, employment opportunities, and social services.
- 2) To investigate the impact of geographic location on regional income inequality, examining how the geographic isolation or connectivity of certain areas affects their economic development and integration into national growth.
- 3) To conduct a normative juridical analysis of existing laws and policies related to spatial planning, population density management, and regional development, evaluating their effectiveness in addressing income inequality.
- 4) To propose legal reforms and policy recommendations that can help mitigate income inequality, promoting more balanced and inclusive development across Indonesia's diverse regions.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Income Inequality in Indonesia

Income inequality in Indonesia is influenced by various economic and spatial factors, with a notable disparity between urban centers like Jakarta and rural areas. This inequality is worsened by uneven access to education, healthcare, and infrastructure. Despite national economic growth, this progress has not been equally distributed across provinces, leading to persistent regional disparities. Government spending has been recognized as a tool for addressing regional inequality, but its effectiveness is limited, as fiscal policies in Western Indonesia have not significantly reduced inequality [14]. The Human Development Index (HDI) plays a key role, with higher HDI correlating with reduced inequality, while other indicators like GRDP per capita and unemployment rates show little impact [2]. Economic growth and information technology are linked to reduced inequality, while poverty and investment exacerbate it [4]. Additionally, Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) and GRDP per capita contribute to economic growth but widen the income gap, highlighting the need for policies that ensure more equitable distribution [2]. The concentration of economic activities in Java, Bali, and Sumatra, combined with a lack of significant industrial development in other parts of the country, has led to a growing income gap.

2.2 Spatial Planning and Income Inequality

Spatial planning in Indonesia is crucial for shaping the distribution of resources and economic activities, but it faces significant challenges in achieving equitable development. The Master Plan for the Acceleration and Expansion of Indonesian Economic Development (MP3EI) has been criticized for focusing on already prosperous regions, which exacerbates regional inequalities by prioritizing infrastructure in urban centers like Java and Sumatra, while neglecting rural areas [6]. Effective spatial planning must integrate social and economic factors to promote balanced development across both urban and rural areas, involving strategic land use management, zoning, and infrastructure development that can influence economic outcomes at regional and national levels. Additionally, urban areas face environmental challenges, including waste management and the need for green spaces to mitigate global warming effects [15]. In terms of disaster risk reduction, spatial planning in cities like Surabaya reveals a need for improved policies to create resilient urban environments [16]. Technologically, Geographic Information Systems (GIS), such as the GISTARU system, support smart city development by providing accessible spatial information, although data integration inconsistencies remain a challenge [17]. Public participation in spatial planning, as seen in Bekasi city, can improve environmental management and sustainability [7].

2.3 Population Density and Economic Disparities

Population density plays a significant role in shaping economic landscapes, especially in urban areas like Indonesia's major cities, where it can drive economic activity and productivity but also lead to challenges such as income inequality. In high-density areas, such as Jakarta, Surabaya, and Medan, urbanization has created both opportunities and challenges for income distribution. High population density attracts businesses, fostering growth due to economies of density, where a large population draws firms, particularly in retail and services, stimulating innovation [18]. In cities like Shanghai, factors such as

transportation accessibility and land use diversity influence population density and economic dynamics [19]. However, despite economic opportunities, high population density in Indonesia exacerbates income inequality, with wealth concentrated among a small elite while many remain in low-paying jobs, especially in informal sectors [20]. The high cost of living and lack of affordable housing further widen the income gap [20]. The stark disparity between urban and rural areas in Indonesia highlights how population density in cities concentrates wealth and opportunities, leaving rural regions underdeveloped [21].

2.4 Geographic Location and Regional Inequality

Geographic location plays a significant role in income inequality in Indonesia, an archipelagic nation with varying levels of economic development across its regions. Disparities are particularly evident between the more developed islands like Java, Bali, and Sumatra, and the less developed eastern regions such as Papua and Maluku. Geographic isolation in areas like Papua and Maluku restricts access to markets, investment, and infrastructure, hindering economic growth and contributing to higher poverty rates [3]. The lack of infrastructure, including road access, exacerbates development challenges in these remote areas [3]. While programs like the Regional Development Acceleration (P2DT) aim to reduce these disparities, bureaucratic inefficiencies and poor policy implementation have limited their effectiveness (Habibi, 2024). The proposal to establish the National Capital City in East Kalimantan is seen as a long-term strategy to promote regional development and mitigate income inequality (Maichal et al., 2024). Economic indicators such as Gross Regional Domestic Product (GRDP) per capita and Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) have been linked to increasing income inequality, suggesting that economic growth alone cannot resolve geographic disparities [2]. Spatial analysis shows that improving infrastructure and connectivity in remote regions is crucial, as economic growth and

accessibility can significantly reduce poverty [22].

2.5 Legal Frameworks and Policies

Legal frameworks and policies governing spatial planning, population management, and regional development play a critical role in shaping economic outcomes. Indonesia's legal system has made strides in addressing income inequality through various laws and regulations. The National Spatial Planning Act (UU No. 26/2007), for example, seeks to ensure that spatial development is carried out equitably and sustainably, promoting the integration of social, economic, and environmental considerations. However, the implementation of these policies has often been hampered by inconsistencies, lack of coordination between national and regional governments, and limited enforcement capacity.

In recent years, there has been increasing recognition of the need for more inclusive development policies. The National Medium-Term Development Plan (RPJMN) and the 2019-2024 National Development Plan focus on reducing regional disparities and promoting inclusive economic growth. However, the challenge remains in translating these broad policy goals into concrete actions that address the specific drivers of income inequality, such as spatial planning, population density, and geographic location.

2.6 Conceptual Framework

The existing literature suggests that spatial planning, population density, and geographic location all contribute to income inequality, but their impact is shaped by the legal frameworks and policies in place. This study adopts a normative juridical approach to assess the effectiveness of existing laws and policies in addressing these issues. By analyzing the intersection of legal frameworks with spatial, demographic, and geographic factors, this research aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of how these variables interact and influence income inequality in Indonesia.

3. METHODS

3.1 Research Design

This research employs a qualitative research design with a normative juridical approach to assess the existing legal frameworks related to spatial planning, population density, and geographic location, and their impact on income inequality in Indonesia. The study aims to analyze the content of relevant laws, regulations, and policies governing regional development, land use, and population management. The research also seeks to examine how these legal frameworks have influenced economic outcomes and contributed to or mitigated income inequality across different regions of Indonesia.

The research design is exploratory, as it aims to fill gaps in the literature by focusing on how legal mechanisms can shape socioeconomic outcomes, particularly in relation to spatial planning and regional inequality. The study will focus on Indonesian laws and regulations, with a particular emphasis on their implementation and enforcement.

3.2 Data Collection Methods

This study employs a normative juridical analysis using secondary data from various sources. Legal documents and regulations, including the National Spatial Planning Act (UU No. 26/2007), the Regional Development Law (UU No. 25/2004), the Master Plan for the Acceleration and Expansion of Indonesian Economic Development (MP3EI), and relevant local government regulations, serve as primary references. Government reports from agencies like the National Development Planning Agency (BAPPENAS) and Statistics Indonesia (BPS) will provide insights into the implementation of spatial planning policies and their effects on income inequality. Academic literature on spatial planning, population density, geographic location, and income inequality in Indonesia will contribute theoretical and empirical perspectives. Additionally, case studies of specific regions will illustrate the impact of spatial planning and geographic location on income

inequality, drawing on regional development plans, demographic profiles, and income distribution data from BPS or regional development reports.

3.3 Data Analysis Techniques

The data analysis in this study employs a qualitative content analysis approach, focusing on interpreting legal texts, policies, and reports. Document analysis will systematically review legal documents, regulations, and reports to identify provisions related to spatial planning, population density, and regional development, assessing their effectiveness in addressing income inequality and regional disparities. Thematic analysis will identify key patterns, such as the impact of spatial planning policies, population density, and geographic location on economic outcomes, while highlighting gaps in the legal frameworks contributing to inequality. A comparative analysis will evaluate variations in legal frameworks and their effects on regional income inequality across diverse regions, such as Java and Sumatra versus Papua and Maluku. Finally, a normative evaluation will assess the adequacy of these legal frameworks in addressing income inequality, ensuring alignment with principles of justice, equity, and sustainable development.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Spatial Planning Laws and Income Inequality

Spatial planning laws in Indonesia have a critical role in shaping regional development and addressing income inequality. The National Spatial Planning Act (UU No. 26/2007) outlines principles that promote balanced development, including the need for equitable distribution of resources across different regions. However, the implementation of these principles has faced challenges. The Master Plan for the Acceleration and Expansion of Indonesian Economic Development (MP3EI), which aimed to stimulate regional economic development, has been criticized for prioritizing infrastructure projects in more developed regions like Java and Bali, while

less-developed regions such as Papua and Maluku receive fewer investments. This has led to disparities in income between regions, exacerbating existing inequalities.

Spatial planning policies have also focused on the development of industrial zones and urban centers, often ignoring rural areas or underdeveloped regions. This emphasis on urbanization without sufficient attention to rural development has contributed to an uneven distribution of economic opportunities, further entrenching income inequality. Regional spatial plans often lack mechanisms for enforcing equitable development, leaving certain regions without the necessary infrastructure and services to compete economically.

4.2 Population Density and Regional Disparities

Population density plays a significant role in income inequality in Indonesia, particularly with densely populated regions like Jakarta, Surabaya, and Bandung exhibiting higher economic growth and greater income concentration, while less populated areas struggle with poverty and limited resources. Laws such as the Population Administration Law (UU No. 23/2006) encourage migration to urban centers, drawing individuals seeking economic opportunities. However, this influx of people has resulted in urban overpopulation and regional imbalances, where the wealth and opportunities of cities contrast sharply with the underdeveloped rural regions. These disparities are not sufficiently addressed by legal frameworks, as policies fail to encourage more balanced population distribution across the country.

In densely populated areas, the concentration of wealth and opportunities leads to higher income levels, but it also intensifies competition for limited resources, such as affordable housing, employment, and public services. Conversely, in less densely populated regions, there is often an underutilization of available land and resources, contributing to lower income levels and limited economic activity. Urbanization in cities like Jakarta has exacerbated social inequality and economic segregation, as

represented in media depictions like the film *Jakarta vs Everybody*, which illustrates the stark contrast in access to resources [23]. This competition for resources in urban areas drives some individuals toward crime as a means of survival, further deepening income inequality [23].

Economic and spatial factors also play crucial roles in shaping income inequality. While economic growth and population density do not significantly impact environmental quality, human development does, indicating the need for policies that integrate human development with environmental strategies [24]. Income inequality is influenced more by economic factors, such as per capita income and foreign direct investment, rather than spatial linkages between regions [4]. Indonesia's archipelagic nature presents additional challenges, with remote areas lagging due to lack of infrastructure and resources, compounded by bureaucratic inefficiencies and inadequate government policies [3]. Central government support for infrastructure and human resource development is crucial for addressing these regional development challenges. Furthermore, population density positively affects financial inclusion, highlighting the importance of financial infrastructure development in urban areas, while education alone does not significantly impact financial inclusion, suggesting the need for a more comprehensive policy approach [25].

4.3 Geographic Location and Economic Opportunities

Geographic location plays a crucial role in income inequality in Indonesia, with coastal and urban regions like Jakarta, Surabaya, and Makassar benefiting from better access to infrastructure, ports, and markets, which contribute to higher levels of economic development. These regions are more integrated into both global and national economies, attracting investments and offering more economic opportunities. In contrast, remote areas such as Papua, Nusa Tenggara, and parts of Kalimantan face significant challenges due to geographic isolation, which limits their access to

resources and hinders economic growth, resulting in higher income inequality [26].

The Regional Autonomy Law (UU No. 32/2004) was designed to grant local governments the authority to manage regional development, but this has resulted in uneven growth across the country. While some regions in strategic locations have been able to attract investment and foster economic growth, other more isolated areas struggle to implement effective policies to reduce income inequality. This geographic disparity continues to persist despite legal efforts aimed at addressing these imbalances, as local governments in less accessible regions face challenges in creating policies that can promote equitable development [26].

To address these geographic disparities, several initiatives have been proposed. For example, the relocation of Indonesia's capital to East Kalimantan is seen as an opportunity to promote inclusive and sustainable economic growth in less developed areas [27]). Additionally, investment in infrastructure and regional policies could help boost economic opportunities and reduce income inequality [2]. However, challenges such as geopolitical risks remain in the development of the new capital city [28]. Despite these efforts, spatial aspects of income inequality have not been sufficiently addressed, and policies to reduce regional disparities need further refinement [4].

4.4 Discussion

4.4.1 Legal Gaps and Implementation Challenges

The findings indicate that while Indonesian spatial planning and population management laws are designed to promote balanced development, significant gaps in implementation exist. One of the key issues identified is the lack of enforceable regulations that ensure equitable distribution of economic benefits. The legal frameworks often prioritize economic growth in certain regions, leading to overdevelopment in urban areas and neglect of rural and remote regions. This results in growing income inequality between urban and rural populations.

Moreover, spatial planning laws are often not aligned with regional development policies. For instance, while there are provisions for equitable regional development in national policies like the MP3EI, these plans have not always been effectively translated into concrete actions in the regions. The absence of clear enforcement mechanisms and accountability structures has hindered the success of these policies in reducing regional income disparities.

4.4.2 The Role of Decentralization in Addressing Inequality

The decentralization process in Indonesia, as outlined in the Regional Autonomy Law (UU No. 32/2004), allows local governments to manage their regional development. However, while decentralization has enabled local governments to tailor policies to the specific needs of their regions, it has also led to inconsistent implementation and disparities in policy effectiveness. Some local governments have successfully implemented strategies to promote economic growth and reduce income inequality, while others lack the capacity or political will to do so.

One example is the development of Special Economic Zones (SEZs) in certain regions, which have successfully attracted investment and created jobs. However, these initiatives are often limited to specific areas and do not benefit the broader region. Furthermore, the lack of coordination between central and local governments sometimes leads to overlapping policies or contradictions that hinder effective poverty reduction.

4.4.3 The Importance of Targeted Policy Interventions

To effectively address income inequality, spatial planning and population management policies must be more targeted and context-specific. It is essential to focus not only on the development of urban centers but also on improving the infrastructure,

education, and healthcare services in rural and remote areas. A more integrated approach that balances urban and rural development, combined with targeted interventions to improve access to economic opportunities in geographically disadvantaged regions, could help reduce income inequality.

Additionally, the legal frameworks need to be updated to include stronger provisions for monitoring and evaluating the implementation of spatial planning and population management policies. This would ensure that the intended outcomes of reducing income inequality are actually being achieved and that legal reforms are adapted to changing economic conditions.

5. CONCLUSION

The analysis of spatial planning, population density, and geographic location in Indonesia reveals that the country's legal frameworks, while comprehensive, have not fully addressed the disparities in income distribution. Despite the existence of laws aimed at equitable regional development, such as the National Spatial Planning Act and Regional Autonomy Law, challenges in enforcement, insufficient coordination, and the prioritization of urban over rural areas have exacerbated income inequality. Areas with high population density and better geographic accessibility have prospered, while remote regions remain disadvantaged. To reduce these inequalities, there is a need for more targeted legal interventions, stronger implementation mechanisms, and improved alignment between national and regional development policies. By focusing on more inclusive policies and improving the effectiveness of decentralization, Indonesia can make significant progress toward reducing income inequality and promoting balanced economic development across all regions.

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